

Poetry.

DOWN TO SILOAM'S HEALING POOL.

With blinded eyes and bleeding feet,
In wretchedness, I struggled on—
I knew not where, I cared not where;
For home, and hope, and love were gone.

All famishing for food and light,
And shiv'ring in the wintry blast,
I called, with feeble lips, for aid;
The world, unheeding, hurried past.

Despairingly I called to Heaven,
When, lo, at once about me came
A rush of misty wings that fanned
A spark of slumb'ring faith in flame.

And, list'ning close, my eager ear
Heard footfalls coming down the way;
Then some One spat upon the ground;
Then some One touched my eyes with clay.

Down to Siloam's healing pool
Two strong arms gently carried me,
And then a soothing voice said, "Wash."
I washed, O blessed Christ, and see!

For gratitude, unfeigned, I stand
And watch for mortals groaning by,
And, from my heart of hearts of faith,
To him who gave me sight I cry:

"Anoint their eyes with clay, O Christ,
And bear them, as thou didst bear me,
To cool Siloam's wondrous pool,
That they may kneel, and wash, and see!"

—Will A. Davis.

Contributions.

AN ELEGANT SERMON.

A sermon delivered to the Junior Order United American Mechanics on Sunday night, Feb. 19, by Rev. B. C. Moomaw.

Text:—"If I forgot thee, Oh, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." Ps. 137: 5.

If in the time of their prosperity the people of Israel had minded the things which lay at the foundation of their national life, by which alone they could be guaranteed that permanency and prosperity inseparable from a loyal practice and broad development of their divine institutions, they would never have had to say, in the bitterness of their souls, "By the river of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept."

God had established them in a land of wonderful fertility, a land of corn and wine, a land whose geographical position upon the shores of the great sea, and in the exact center of the eastern hemisphere, fitted it to be politically and commercially the capital of the nations, and the emporium of the world, and by His unfailing truth, by His almighty power, by the stability of His eternal throne He had pledged to them a career of unexampled prosperity, of victory over all enemies, of wide empire and irresistible power, upon condition that they would

faithfully obey His laws and perpetually keep His commandments.

It was to be a nation founded upon justice, equality and equity, a nation founded upon righteousness, as these essential principles are set forth in the ten commandments.

In a superficial reading of the Old Testament history we may wonder, perhaps, at the stern insistence of Jehovah upon absolute fidelity to the Sinaic law. We may be disposed to stagger at His terrible threatenings, and His equally terrible judgments against the infraction of that law. This feeling might have some rational basis provided that this law was in itself arbitrary, and not founded in the nature of things.

If without regard to that absolute necessity which has its foundation in the integrity of the whole material and moral universe, God has issued His fiats like some despotic monarch, and said; "Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that," laying awful penalties against disobedience, our reason, our sense of justice might find it difficult to discover the harmony and equity of His government.

But when we reflect that the principles of the Decalogue are essential, existing in the nature of things, that they lie at the very basis of the normal community, of human progress, of possible government among men, and of ultimate civilization, we are constrained at once to say that no motive of hope or of fear could be too powerful, no judicial lash enforcing obedience could be too terrible, since the wrath of God itself is not more to be dreaded than the natural and logical consequences, either to nations, or individuals, which flow from the violation of the moral law.

The law of gravitation, for example, is not an arbitrary law in the sense of being the mere freak of a dominant will and a limitless power. It exists in the nature of things, in the very constitution of the material universe, and in its normal effect is as beneficent as the breath of life. Nevertheless disobey that law, and it will dash the proudest, the tenderest, the most beautiful, the most powerful to certain and inevitable destruction. It would break your bones upon pitiless crags, or entomb you in the deep dark caverns of the sea. Annul that law, and this world with all its precious living freight would plunge hither and thither in a wild, erratic career of ruin, or sink into silent darkness and death, like the motionless pendulum of the clock of doom which marks the hour of eternal midnight.

By themselves, and apart from the inexorable necessity as well as the universal

beneficence of that great law, these effects may seem to be as cruel as they are terrible. But they are not a thousandth part as terrible or cruel as would be the abrogation of that law, or even the slightest subversion of its integrity.

This consideration of the paramount interest of the whole universe, in which is involved, as a matter of course, the welfare of every creature, is a complete answer to all the charges of excessive severity brought against the administration of essential law, whether physical or moral, and the answer is rendered still more satisfactory by the reflection that aside from the inherited limitations of our nature, disobedience to God's laws is not the result of necessity, but of willful rebellion against God, the consequences of which ought to be sufficient to deter the most foolhardy.

That is a remarkable characteristic of human nature that we do not seem to learn anything of permanent value except by experience. It is said that fools will learn in no other school, but I suspect that the author of this cynical sentiment has faithfully photographed himself, for all history and observation reveals the fact that this peculiar feature of the human mind is well nigh universal. We go on repeating the mistakes and bringing upon our heads the disasters of former generations, with this exception that now and then a preponderating mass of the testimony of experience upon some particular point, accumulating through succeeding generations, will at last introduce an epoch of revolutionary thought, and set the world a step further toward the ultimate goal of wisdom.

This idea is strikingly illustrated in the early history of the Jewish nation. In spite of visible and marvelous manifestations of God's presence and power, in spite of their own repeated experiences of dire disaster, of defeat and despoilment, of bitter servitude to heathen neighbors, of fiery wrath for their transgressions and tender forgiveness for their repentance, in spite of all this they went on into deeper depths of astounding iniquity, of insolent disregard and defiance of God's essential laws, until at last those who survived the fierce red sword of Nebuchadnezzar joined in that melancholy wail, so full of pathos, by the rivers of Babylon. There for seventy years, in sorrowful exile from their native land, from their beloved Jerusalem, bending to the heavy yoke of their Chaldean masters, they finally learned the solemn lesson that righteousness is the defense of a nation, and that the transgression of God's laws is the open road to inevitable ruin. Up to the date